

Dear Members of the Appropriation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the proposed budget. I am Dawn DeMatteo, a single Mom of a 24-year old son, Anthony, who has severe intellectual and developmental disabilities as a result of Cerebral Palsy, requiring 24/7 care. This is one of the many times I've testified here at the LOB over the past several years on behalf of my Son and others with I/DD.

After experiencing numerous years of cuts, we are pleased and thankful that the Governor included new funding in his proposed budget for DDS and supports new initiatives for DDS. It's enlightening that many years of testifying and educating, those without voices are being heard in Hartford.

The disheartening part is that the budget did not include funding for day and employment services for those graduating at age 21, behavioral services, or family support grants. It's the constant tug of war for services within this population against balancing the budget. We believe caring for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities should be a core function of government. Services for these individuals are life lines for families and provide consistency for those with I/DD. There are thousands of families at the end of their ropes, living day by day, and trying to survive as parents, caregivers, siblings.

My family was one of those up until 7 months ago when my Son was placed in a private provider group home in Wallingford. It took years of fighting and begging for services for my family that was falling apart. I was at the end of my rope with my younger Son right behind me. Ten years younger than Anthony, Michael had to come home every day after school to care for his brother until I got home from work.

Today life is different, Anthony is settled into his new home with four other individuals with around the clock care. He attends a day program at Sarah in North Haven, where he can continue working on his skills. Michael is getting to enjoy his teenage years. As for me, I remain devoted to my children and advocating for those families in CT in need of supports.

Our request to you, the legislators, is to restore the DDS for all services and move in the direction that caring for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be a core function of government.

Thank you,

Dawn DeMatteo

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